

**Ravalli County Board of County Commissioners and
the Ravalli County Planning Board
Meeting Minutes for November 29, 2006
7:00 p.m.
Commissioner's Meeting Room, 215 S. 4th Street, Hamilton, Montana**

**Joint Public Meeting and Work Session
Strategic Planning for the Ravalli County Planning Program**

*This is a summary of the meeting, not a verbatim transcript. A CD of the meeting
may be purchased from the Planning Department for \$5.00.*

1. Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Lund called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call for Planning Board (See Attachment A, Roll Call Sheet)

(A) Members

Mary Lee Bailey (present)
Dale Brown (present)
Phil Connelly (absent – excused)
Ben Hillicoss (present)
Dan Huls (present)
Maura Murray (absent – excused)
Tori Nobles (present)
Chip Pigman (present)
Tom Ruffatto (present)
Les Rutledge (present)
Lori Schallenberger (absent – excused)

Park Board Representative: Bob Cron (present)

(B) Staff

Afton Clack
Jennifer De Groot
John Lavey
Karen Hughes
Renee Van Hoven
Shaun Morrell
Tristan Riddell

3. Amendments to the Agenda

Commissioner Lund recommended inserting public comment before joint discussion on item number five.

Dan motioned to second the amendment.

4. Correspondence

There were none.

5. Public Meeting and Work Session: Strategic Planning for the Ravalli County Planning Program

(A) Staff Overview: (See Attachment B, Planning Program Strategic Planning Sessions Draft)

Karen said that the Planning Department, Planning Board, and Commissioners have agreed that they need to open up a dialogue between themselves and the public to talk about where they need to get to in order to establish some strategic priorities for the County's planning program. She added that at some point they may bring in a facilitator to help out if they can find somebody willing to do so. She said that their goal for the strategic planning program is to establish strategic priorities that are agreed upon for the County, and from that they will develop a work program. She noted that their primary goal for tonight is to come to some level of agreement of the strategic priorities for the planning program and to focus in on what those are. She said the Planning Department took their ideas to the Planning Board and the Commissioners to look at and think about, but that they are not set in stone because they wanted to wait until they could discuss them with the public. She stated the Planning Department is looking to substantially improve their capacity over the next two to three years to create a sustainable, comprehensive, and fully staffed planning program for Ravalli County that includes the following elements; countywide density zoning, Corvallis Area planning and zoning, the Highway 93 Corridor planning and zoning project, the Old Corvallis Road Area 3 Plan implementation, water course setbacks, Parks and Recreation planning, the public involvement process, sustainability, and the design of development standards. She added that countywide zoning and modernizing and updating the Subdivision Regulations go hand in hand.

(B) Public Comment:

Linda Cardenas said that under the first bullet, Develop Countywide Zoning, she would like to see support for the wildlife corridors and linkage zones between the Bitterroot Range and the Sapphire Range. She added that she would like to see something that addresses the need for the protection of groundwater and surface water resources which might include an evaluation of the current status of those resources.

Commissioner Thompson stated they are working to form a water quality district and that they are waiting to see what type of negative response they get from that.

Dave Shultz said that he would like to see the Ravalli County Growth Policy as one of the important considerations and starting points. He stated that he thinks it is important to have someone outside the County to facilitate the process. He added that he would really like to see the broader public being involved early on and all the way through the process rather than the Planning staff and Planning Board coming up with policies, taking it out, and then presenting it at a formal public meeting. He noted that he thinks it is more effective to have small groups of geographically interested people involved in the very early stages rather than responding to something that is already half set in stone.

Roger De Haan said that he agrees with Dave Schultz about the Growth Policy because there was a lot of work put into it and there is a lot of valuable things in it that need to be tied in. He said that there are a couple of things that he sees missing such as a lighting ordinance.

Commissioner Lund noted that they are enforcing it under the subdivision review process and that every subdivision has a provision to control lighting.

Roger De Haan said that the Commissioners have got to broaden the scope away from a lot of the focus being on subdivisions. He added that they need to get some rules and regulations that govern all development, not just that of subdivisions because there is a lot of development happening in non-subdivision areas that they still need to pay attention to. He said he thinks the lighting ordinance needs to be expanded and that the County badly needs a grading ordinance. He noted that a grading ordinance is common in a lot of other places and that a lot of people are building roads and excavations that can be extremely destructive by allowing sediment into streams and erosion into hillsides. He added that he endorses the stream setback idea but that at some point they are going to have to start talking about building permits. He stated he does not necessarily want to say he endorses uniform building code but that with the health board and the grain field regulations they are realizing that there are so many of these individual things that a person is responsible for doing before they start building. He said they need to have a mechanism or a checklist and that building permits are a logical way of doing that. He noted that they also need to talk about impact fees and that if they had a fair, logical way of doing them then some subdivisions would self-regulate. He said it is frustrating that each individual school district has to spend their own money to do their own study to receive the impact fee. He added that a really good facilitator could make a huge difference but that a bad facilitator could potentially be harmful.

Commissioner Lund noted that they did not say much about the Growth Policy because the things that they have accomplished in the past are all listed in the "Planning Program Goals 2007-2008" document with the Growth Policy being mentioned several times. She added that they have not forgotten the Growth Policy and that they are hoping to keep it current.

Commissioner Thompson stated that they cannot forget the Growth Policy because it dictates what they can and cannot do and that it is pointed out throughout the subdivision process. He said there have been various people who have criticized the Growth Policy by saying that it does not do anything but in fact they utilize it on a daily basis.

Kathleen Driscoll asked if there was any way of revisiting the issue that the initial Growth Policy was planned by the people. She asked if there was any way to develop it, expedite it, and bring it back to the original way that the people made it and if there was a way to bring those action items back on board.

Commissioner Lund said that the action items are still there and that she thinks that it would just create extra paperwork but that they would talk to the planners.

Marilyn Owns Medicine stated that she is concerned about identifying goals without involving the public in a process for how they are going to accomplish this task. She said she thinks they need to have a plan for how they are going to implement or even

come up with what the goals are. She added that if they are really going to involve the public they are going to need a meeting with the public to talk about what needs to be accomplished, how to schedule it, and how to get the public more involved. She stated that they have put together a strategic plan that they would like to give to the Boards and Staff that talks about additional issues (See Attachment C, Zoning Guide from Phil Taylor). She said it evaluates the re-growth; it evaluates the problem and gives a good overview of where the County is. She said she thinks the piece that is missing is evaluating roads. She added that roads are the key to reasonable development.

Karen asked who prepared it.

Marilyn Owns Medicine stated that Phil Taylor prepared it. She said the handout is how they should implement interim zoning.

Commissioner Thompson said, as far as determining where they are at, they need to understand that they did have a professor from the University come down to present a program that told them where they were at, what they needed, and what the economic viability of the valley was.

Marilyn Owns Medicine noted that she wished the public could have been there.

Commissioner Thompson replied that all of their meetings are open to the public.

Stewart Brandborg said he sees some significant basic steps in this presentation and the Bitterooters for Planning would like to join in an inclusive effort that reaches out to all segments of the public. He stated an inclusive effort necessitates the type of public involvement that Marilyn has referred to and that Phil Taylor has outlined in the document. He added that he thinks it is important to reinitiate the examination of the Growth Policy and to restore parts of it that represented significant strengthening changes. He said getting people involved requires a skilled facilitator and that they need to find a way out of this strife-ridden controversy where development interests are pitted against neighbors. He stated that the planning program is severely understaffed. He said it is essential for Staff to move immediately to gain full benefit of the analysis and fact gathering that must underline any comprehensive zoning efforts and it is important to involve professional Staff as early as possible to define what interim zoning represents. He stated that they cannot proceed piece by piece with the Land Use Subcommittee's countywide efforts on density zoning, the Corvallis Area planning and zoning, the U.S. Highway 93 Corridor zoning, Old Corvallis Road Area 3 Plan implementation, water course setbacks, and parks and recreational planning. He said, more importantly, is the process of involving the public in the most constructive way.

Candi Jerke noted that one of the things that they have in the Growth Policy is a Capital Improvements Plan. She said if they had a five-year Capital Improvements Plan, it would help with planning issues. She added that they have to take care of the Interim Zoning because it has to be done within a year, or two years, if extended. She asked if all the other current projects will fit into the Interim Zoning project.

John Kellog said that through the process of ramping up Staff, one of their goals should be Staff efficiency, which would be an important effort. He added contracting out portions of this effort are important, but tying staff into that effort to gain the history with the Staff, Planning Board, and Commissioners interacting with the consultant is extremely important.

Dick Martin said he wanted to make sure they all understood how personal arbitrary zoning can be. He stated that when they are arbitrarily zoning, they are taking away people's retirements.

Jason Rice said what he wanted to reinforce tonight was prioritization. He stated that contracting is an excellent way to take care of issues in an expedient way. He added that he really encourages a co-op between the towns. He said if services are not made available through assistance from the County in some way, then people are going to start developing their own systems. He stated the backlog is going to continue to grow and the Planning Department is going to have to keep chipping away at subdivision review.

Jake Kammerer said if the Planning Board was going to take on zoning and planning issues, they may want to consider expanding the size of their Planning Board. He stated that he does not think that the Planning Board has been able to represent the people because the people do not come to their representatives. He said citizens, along with the development community, are looking for predictability.

Laru Morehouse stated that municipal wastewater treatment is important and needs to be taken into consideration.

Eddie Olwell said he was glad to see setbacks as an immediate goal for planning. He stated the objectives for setbacks should be to protect Montana's fish, wildlife, and parks for their important economic and social values to the community, and to protect public health and safety.

Terry Nelson said two goals that should be prioritized are how to bring in economic development and ways to provide affordable housing.

Kristin Smith noted one thing missing from the priorities list is transportation planning. She said if the Boards and Staff are going to be looking at zoning, they have to think about networks for getting around the County. She added Missoula County's plans will help lay a base for anticipating uses around Ravalli County.

Commissioner Lund said there is a transportation plan which was done by Summit.

(C) Joint Discussion and Deliberation of the Planning Board, Planning Department, and the Board of County Commissioners:

Ben said he had specific suggestions for how they identify which subdivision proposals should be looked at by the Planning Board. He stated if a subdivision is of sufficient size, sufficient complexity, or if it has new issues, it should be looked at by the Planning Board or a subcommittee. He said the Planning Board could come up with a three-to-five person subcommittee where they could rotate every three or six months and they could come up with a list of criteria for the subcommittee to review off of. He added he would like to see the Planning Board talk with the State legislative branch and executive branch to have them put money back into statewide resources.

Commissioner Lund said they did have a branch for that called Local Government Assistance. She stated they should push the Legislature to re-activate that branch.

Karen said Commissioner Chilcott had a suggestion to work with the Legislature and the State on planning issues for fast-growing counties. She added the Legislature is looking at reinvigorating a local Technical Assistance Program at state level, which is difficult with a state that has a lot of counties that are not growing.

Chip said the Planning Department is a few months behind on subdivision review which is State-mandated. He stated he thinks the challenge for the Planning Board is to prioritize what the most important goals are so they can accomplish most of them within one or two years.

Tori added that they should draft a letter to send from the Planning Board to the Commissioners so that the Commissioners can send a letter to Legislature encouraging them to help.

Commissioner Lund agreed that is something they can get done. She said the Legislature will meet with the Commissioners and possibly the Planning Board.

Commissioner Thompson said the sponsor of the Legislation on Subdivision Regulations, Rick Laible, is from our County. He stated that the Commissioners need to find out what they want the Legislature to do, and then relay those problems that exist with their proposed solutions, to the Legislature. He added only eleven Counties have growth while the others are at a standstill or actually losing population.

Dan asked Ben to give an overview of the Land Use Subcommittee.

Ben said the Subcommittee settled on doing a general countywide density zoning, a limited amount of land use zoning, and looking at the feasibility of addressing sustainability issues. He added they were asked to look at the Highway 93 Corridor issues, they drafted a Zoning Regulation Statutes document where they are doing an internal review of it, they gathered and looked at maps, and they decided to initiate the process in the Florence School District. He added they have one or two more meetings before the Subcommittee is done going through the document and Staff support will be provided to maintain the document. He said the Subcommittee feels that they need to get organized first before they get too much public comment, but that their meetings are open to the public.

Dan said there is a joint subcommittee of the Right to Farm and Ranch Board and the Bitterroot Land Trust where they have established a recommendation for the Open Lands Board. He stated they are in the process of formulating preliminary by-laws and mission statements and are working on the preliminary draft of the application process and criteria for the Open Lands Board. He noted the next steps are to hold a public meeting proposing the makeup of the Open Lands Board; then the Commissioners will hold a public hearing and advertise the positions.

Karen stated the County worked with MDT and the Land Use Law Clinic last year to do a preliminary study that led to interest in planning and zoning along the Highway 93 Corridor. She said the Commissioners and Planning Board agreed to take the Land Use Law Clinic's assistance in working on Land Use Planning. She added they anticipate an extensive public process. She said there are two parts of the interim zoning: one is administration, while the primary focus is addressing issues brought forward by the public in the interim zoning measure.

Commissioner Lund asked the Planning Board if they agree that interim zoning is their number one priority.

Chip said interim zoning is a high priority, but subdivisions that meet the current zoning need to keep being reviewed because the Boards and Staff are required by law to meet those mandated deadlines.

Karen said existing projects have to follow the legislative mandates for timelines, but beyond that, the Boards and Staff need to have strategic priorities.

Commissioner Lund noted that interim zoning did not affect anything with an average density of more than two acres. Therefore, the Planning Department will keep working on those subdivisions.

Commissioner Thompson said the Planning Staff is not interested in doing only subdivision review. He noted they have each been tasked with different projects, while at the same time, taking care of subdivisions that have to meet certain timelines. He said the citizens have voted for interim zoning so that has to be the Board and Staff's number one priority. He stated other issues they need to talk about are gravel pits, race tracks, building permits, and sexually oriented business. He said the Commissioners, Planning Board, and Staff need to plan how they are going to keep the Planning Board involved in the subdivision process.

Commissioner Lund asked if the procedural change will free up the Planning Department so they can help deal with these new priorities.

Karen said one reason why they recommended the changes was because of potential resource savings for the Planning Board and Staff.

Renee said her and Karen hoped that the Commissioners, Planning Board, and public would come up with priorities first, and then think about resources and staffing.

Ben encouraged the Planning Department to hire grant writers from within the County to help receive grant money.

Commissioner Lund said the County does have a grant writer, but they have not utilized her for planning yet.

Karen stated people with resources who have offered to assist the planning program ask what their plan is. She said they are not going to put money behind something when the Boards and Staff do not have a concrete idea about what their strategic priorities are and how to move forward with them. She added the Commissioners, Planning Board, and Planning Department need to establish strategic priorities so they can then establish a work plan and acquire resources.

Commissioner Thompson said the next priority he would like to see on the list is the Corvallis Area planning and zoning. He stated the Corvallis Civic Club, Fire District, and Sewer Board have approached the County about doing some zoning in that area. He said if they can work that project out to do zoning, the Boards and Staff would have a blueprint, which would make it easier for the next community.

Renee stated they have a draft plan for a multi-neighborhood plan and a zoning proposal. She said they are hoping to present the plan at the January 15th Civic Club meeting.

Karen suggested that each Commissioner, Planning Board member, and Staff members list their top three priorities so they can get an idea of what everyone is thinking.

Les said at the last meeting, the Planning Board mentioned their top priority would be getting a properly trained facilitator to help them with planning issues. He stated the first thing they should do is come up with a job description for a facilitator. He noted there are more than countywide zoning issues where that person could assist in, such as the Old Corvallis Road Area 3 Project, water course setbacks, parks and recreation, etc.

Bob said the top two priorities are to develop countywide zoning and continue project review.

Ben agreed with Bob. He said he would prioritize the Open Lands Program next because it was approved by the voters. He stated key priorities would be to facilitate public input and comment along with hiring a facilitator for countywide zoning.

Chip said he would limit countywide zoning to density. He stated the Corvallis Area Planning and Zoning and the Highway 93 Corridor Plan would be next on his list of priorities.

Tori said she agrees that the interim zoning mandates the Boards and Staff. She noted watercourse setbacks, the Land Use Subcommittee, and the Highway 93 Corridor are important parts of the zoning process.

Dale said Les drew up a good plan for land use planning which the Land Use Subcommittee will revise and take to the people of Florence. He said the planning program needs a facilitator and, with zoning in place, Staff would be relieved from parts of the subdivision review process.

Mary Lee stated that zoning is first, a facilitator is second, and open space is third on her priorities list.

Dan noted the Land Use Subcommittee has devised a plan to provide input to the Commissioners from the Planning Board. He said the setback effort, the Highway 93 Corridor effort, and the Corvallis planning effort are all functioning and the Old Corvallis Road Area 3 Plan has been adopted. He stated his priority is to not lose sight of any of the issues they have started and invested time in. He added their first priority should be to provide additional support to Staff to continue their efforts.

Commissioner Lund said the public does not realize how much the planning program has done, and that they need a public relations person to relay what they have accomplished. She noted the bottom line is that they do not have enough funds. She said they need a grant-writer, but need to have a plan and the proper information in order to receive a grant.

Renee said that countywide zoning is the top goal on her priorities list. She stated once the Boards and Staff have received a good idea of what their top priorities are, they can figure out what resources they have to work with.

Tristan said project review is mandatory, constant, and a top priority. He added the planning program's next top priority should be countywide zoning.

Shaun said his priority is to find a way to reduce the planning Staff's subdivision work load so they can work on other projects.

John agreed they do need to continue project review. He said second to project review would be to develop countywide zoning, and third would be to update and modernize the Subdivision Regulations.

Dale stated once the Land Use Subcommittee has formatted one part of the County, it will be easier to take to the rest of the County.

Karen said it is agreed they need to continue project review. She added the next highest priority is countywide zoning, and the third choice on her list is to develop the Open Lands Program.

Commissioner Lund asked the Planning Board if the Open Lands Program would take a lot of Staff time.

Dan replied it will take some Staff time and they do need help.

Karen said they are doing research with other communities to see what kind of a Staff load it would require to maintain the Open Lands Program.

Commissioner Thompson said he would spend time checking on grant-writers. He stated the last couple of years the County has increased their reserves and brought the budget up. He noted he has contacts on a nationwide level and that he would dedicate himself to see if he could find money.

Les said the Land Use Subcommittee is approaching the point where they need more citizen involvement. He added they are working on an official zoning map for the Florence area and the Zoning Regulations document for the County. He stated he would like to know at what point the public would like to get involved to discuss those two documents.

Marilyn Owns Medicine said she thought the public was going to have the opportunity to participate in the process before any decisions were made. She added if the public was there from the beginning, they could express their concerns before any documents and plans are put into place.

Les said all the documents are drafts which are there for the public to look at and to offer suggestions.

Les said the next Land Use Subcommittee meeting would be Thursday, November 30, 2006 at 9:00 a.m.

Ben stated the Land Use Subcommittee is producing a draft document, which has a lot of legal definitions. He said they intend to have public input and comment on the maps before they start drawing lines on them. He added the Land Use Subcommittee has been trying to meet every Thursday at 9:00 a.m.

Karen said she has ideas to formulate a proposal to bring back to the Commissioners for consideration at the next meeting. She added other things to consider are publicity ideas to get people more constructively involved. She said they are at a preliminary stage and the next step is to see if Staff can formulate these goals into a prioritized list.

Jake Kammerer said the efforts that are underway are the ones that need publicized so the public can get a concept of what has already been done.

Karen asked for volunteers from the Commissioners and Planning Board to brainstorm how to get more people involved with the planning program process.

6. Close: Public Meeting and Work Session

7. Next Public Meeting and Work Session Regarding this Topic:

December 13, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. in the Commissioner's Meeting Room in the Ravalli County Administrative Services Center

8. Adjournment:

Commissioner Lund adjourned the meeting at 9:08 p.m.